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THE OBSERVATOR.

A Letter to the Observator, *proposing to raise Money for the publick Service by a State-Lottery. The Danger of suffering the Cash of the Nation to stagnate, and the Purse and Sword to be manag'd or engross'd by a few Hands. The Way the* Romans *and our wise Ancestors took to prevent this. A farther Account of the Book, entitl'd,* An Enquiry into the Causes of the Prohibition of Commerce with *France*, &c. *and of the Frauds committed to cheat the Queen of her Customs.*

From **Saturday**, January 24. to **Wednesday**, January 28. 1708.

Country-m. MAster, here's a Letter to you from a Gentleman, who proposes a State-Lottery, as a proper Method to raise Money for the Nation's Service.

Mr. *Observator*,

" AMong the various Contrivances you exhibit " for the publick Advantage, I am mighty " desirous of having your Opinion about Lotteries; " (I mean of that Sort of which our late State one " was) for I find they are charily nourish'd a- " mongst the most refin'd Nations of *Europe*, and " *France* it self has endeavour'd the Practice, but " that the Subject had too much Reason to fear " some foul Attempt upon so great a Cash, as the " Court intended to raise by this Means; so what " was done, came in so coldly, as the *French* Mini- " stry cool'd in their Design. *Holland* and *Venice* " continue the Practice to this Day with great Suc- " cess; so that one shall scarcely read a *Dutch Har- " lem Gazette*, but among the Advertisements, we " find some going on in all the great Towns of " that Country, of which the particular Places make " their Advantage, by keeping back part, for se- " veral Uses of the Towns that promote them: For " Instance, suppose they want Money to build a " Town-House, or Church, to repair a Harbour, " to make a navigable River, or mend a High-way, " &c. they promote a Lottery according to the De- " sign, leaving a seventh or eighth Part for Trou- " ble and Charges, which is apply'd as above---. I " cannot but admonish you of this, your Paper be- " ing so universally read, that a Thing so exceed- " ingly useful, may be as universally made known; " from whence (for any Thing I know to the con- " trary) some one considering this Matter more " nicely, may improve the Notion, and make it " subservient to the Exigency of the Nation, which, " at this Time, may be as necessary as ever, or (as I " hope) ever will be; so that in making your own " Judgment, or leaving it to others, by inserting " this Letter in your Paper, you may oblige the " Publick, and the sooner the better, it being now " a Time of Parliament, when the whole Nation " in Epitome, is upon Ways and Means to raise " Money the easiest Way; which the Writer of " this, humbly conceives may be as soon this Way, " as any other.

Yours, A. B.

Obs. Every Body, who proposes any Thing for the Advantage of the Publick, ought to be encourag'd, *Roger*; for my own Part, I see no Hurt in the Gentleman's Proposal; for all those Things are with Submission to our Superiors, who, if they think this practicable, are capable of preventing those Inconveniencies, that oblig'd our Parliament formerly to discharge private Lotteries, which, by Tricks and other Mismanagement, became a publick Grievance. This Way of raising Money is attended with the Advantage of its being voluntary, and that it has the Prospect of a known *Premium*, without any Fraud to the Nation; whereas, in other Cases, tho' the Interest for advancing Money be ascertain'd, yet, if there be not a severe Penalty against giving or receiving higher *Premiums* than what the Parliament appoints, there's a Sort of Men, who stock-job every Thing, that are capable of finding Ways and Means to make the Nation pay more than was intended for the advancing of such Sums. But in all Cases, *Roger*, wise Governments have taken Care to prevent the stagnating of Money, or having it run in any one Channel, to the Disadvantage of Trade; for 100 *l.* which circulates in Commerce, is more beneficial to the Government and the Publick, than 300 *l.* that runs only betwixt the B--- and E---. Besides, there is this Disadvantage attends the having the Money of the Nation, or the Management of it, in a few Hands; that those who are Masters of the Money, may make themselves Masters of the Crown and Kingdom, and dispose of them to whom they think fit, especially if it should so happen in any Nation or State, that the Management of the Publick Money, and the Command of the Military Power, be engross'd by the same Hands, be they few or many.

Country-m. Pray explain your Meaning by some Instances, Master.

Obs. That may be done very easily, *Roger*; any Man, who has read the *Roman* History, knows that wise People did several Times propose a *Lex Agraria*, and other Methods, to prevent the over-grown Power and Wealth of particular Persons, especially in publick Employments; and so long as they observ'd this Method, their Liberties were secure; but as soon as their Generals and others got the Management of the Purse and the Sword, and by Consequence an Opportunity to hector and bribe, their Liberties were swallow'd up. It was the Fear of the like, *Roger*, that made our wise Neighbours, the *Dutch*, be so constantly upon their Guard against the Princes of the Family of *Orange*; some of whom, by their Power in the Army alone, did several Times endanger their Liberty: And as to this Matter of engrossing Money by a few Hands, the wise *Romans* were oftner than once oblig'd by Force to rescue themselves from the Fraud and Oppression of Money'd Men and Usurers, who had engross'd the publick Cash. When once the Kings of *France* got the Assemblies of the Estates, or National Parliaments, brib'd off, they soon became absolute Tyrants. And we all know from woful Experience, that bribing of Parliaments in the Time of King *Charles* the II. &c. miss'd little of having the same Effect; and had it not been more for Fear of losing their Pensions, than any Thing else, that hinder'd one of those Parliaments from enabling him to raise Money on certain Occasions, without Consent of Parliament, they had overturn'd our Liberties at once.

Country-m. This shews it to be the Duty of all true-hearted *Britains*, Master, to be constantly on their Guard against every Thing that may put it in the Power of a Court, or any Set of Men, to bribe Parliaments; for that's the same Thing in Effect with laying them aside, or, indeed, worse, because it has an Appearance of the Constitution's being entire, and makes the People think they still enjoy their

their Liberty, when in such a Case it is certainly betray'd.

Obs. Our Ancestors, *Roger*, have been so careful to prevent its being in the Power of Courtiers, or Leaders of Factions, to misapply the publick Money allotted for the Defence of the Kingdom, or to aggrandize themselves, so as to over-awe the rest of the Subjects, that they appointed Treasurers of their own, to see it lay'd out, and to be accountable to them for it.

Country-m. Take Heed what you say, Master, except you have good Authority for it.

Obs. Yes, yes, *Roger*; I am not to be frighten'd by the babbling, doubling Under-spur-leathers. My Authority is thus:

"*Rot. Parl.* 1 *Rich.* 2. *Part.* 2. *N.* 9, *and* 27. The "Kingdom being in Point to be lost by the Ene- "mies of *Spain* and *France*, and divers others there "mention'd, who made War both at Land and Sea, "a Subsidy upon the Grand Customs was granted, "as the Words are, *Pur le Defence & Rescous del "Kingdom*; *i. e.* for the Defence and Rescue of the "Kingdom. This was for two Years, and Persons "assign'd to receive and expend the Money, *Com. "Mich.* 3 *Rich.* 2. *London*, *William Walworth* and "*John Philpot*, Citizens of *London*, the Treasurers "of it, upon their Account, shew the Particulars "how this Money was expended, *Circa Salvationem "& Defensionem Regni*; *i. e.* for the Safety and De- "fence of the Kingdom, and were discharg'd.

"5 *R.* 2. *Pars.* 2. *N.* 14 *and* 15. Tunnage and "Poundage granted, *Issuit que soit apply sur Safe- "guard del mere, & nul Part a il hors*; *i. e.* order'd, "that it be apply'd to the Guarding of the Sea, and "to no other Purpose, and the King, *at the Petiti- "on of the Commons, appoints Receivers.*

"6 *R.* 2. *Pars.* 2. *N.* 13. The Commons com- "plain, that notwithstanding the Grant of Tun- "nage and Poundage, the Sea is not kept, and "therefore Persons were nam'd and assign'd in Par- "liament to receive the Money, and do it.

"6 *H.* 4. *N.* 9 *and* 10. Tunnage and Poundage "were granted for two Years, upon Condition, *that "it should cease*, if the King, before *St. Hillary*, pro- "vide not a sufficient Army for the Sea.

Thus, *Roger*, you see the wise Methods taken by our Ancestors, when engag'd in a dangerous War with *France*, *Spain*, &c. and when our Seas were not guarded.

Country-m. If our Superiors think fit to make the Experiment, Master, I am very well satisfy'd we have Citizens of *London* as honest and capable to discharge such a Trust, as *William Walworth* and *John Philpot* were; and I think no Body will deny, that our Citizens are as much concern'd now to have the Seas well scour'd and guarded, as they were; for I dare say, if the *Custom-House* Books then and now be compar'd, it will appear, that the Trade of *London* exceeds what it was in those Days, a hundred to one at least. But now, Master, since we are upon the Customs, let's have some farther Remarks upon the Book, entitl'd, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Prohibition of Commerce with* France, *&c. With an Account of the Methods taken to cheat her Majesty of her Customs.*

Obs. With all my Heart, *Roger*; for 'tis my Opinion, that the Author has discover'd most of the crooked Paths of Fraud and Collusion, by which the Government and fair Traders either are, or may be grosly impos'd upon; therefore it deserves the Care of our Legislature, to prevent Captains of Men of War, Yachts, Packets, Transports, and other Vessels in her Majesty's Service, to bring in Brandy and Wine, *&c.* from *Dutch*, *Danes*, or *Swedes*, they meet at Sea, or from *France*, without paying Custom; for 'tis certainly an intollerable and unnatural Crime for those, who live by her Majesty's Service, to cheat her of her Customs; but much more so in any of those concern'd in that Branch of the Revenue, since, besides what's common to other Cheats, they are guilty of a direct Breach of Oath and Trust. The other fraudulent Practices hinted at by the Gentleman, are, 1. That considerable Quantities of such Goods are brought into our Harbours by *Dutch* Men of War and Merchant-Ships, by Contract, and then run a Shore by Boats of our own. 2. The Employing of small Vessels directly betwixt our own and the *French* Coasts. 3. The bringing in of *French* Wines and Brandy under the Denomination of *Viana* and other Countries, conniv'd at by *Custom-House* Officers. 4. Importing such Goods from *Holland*, *Ireland*, *Jersey*, *Guernsey*, and the *Isle of Man*, in Chests, Hampers, and Casks, with Spaw-Waters, Eggs, Beer, Cyder, Ale, or other Goods on the Top, conniv'd at by *Custom-House* Officers for Bribes, of which our Author says he has been Eye and Ear Witness. 5. By Sham-Captures, taking Ships fraighted with Wine and Brandy by private Contract and Assignation. 6. By Seizures being made by the Importers own Information, after private Agreement between him and the Seizer. 7. By *Custom-House* Officers drawing off the best of the Wine and Brandy, when seiz'd, and selling it, after having fill'd up the Casks with other Stuff, by which sometimes they cheat those whom they made a fraudulent Agreement with. 8. By agreeing with the Owners of the seiz'd Wines or Brandy, *&c.* to undervalue it to any who come to bid for it, and giving them such Tastes for Proof, as discourages the Buyer, and so the Smugler has it at his own Price. 9. By suffering large Hampers, and Chests of Wine to be directed to themselves, in order to cheat her Majesty of her Customs. 10. By such Practices being commanded by noted Men in the Navy, Customs, and Treasury, so as they can supply themselves and Friends with good Wine at seven Pence or eight Pence *per* Quart, and order such and such Quantities to be brought them by Captains of Men of War, Yachts, or Packets from *Holland*, *Ireland*, &c. 11. By allowing the same Certificate to convey double Quantities several Ways. Now, *Roger*, if these Things be true, as the Gentleman asserts in his Book, the like Frauds may be committed, for any Thing we know, in other Branches of the Revenue; and if so, we are not to wonder that Funds have so often prov'd deficient; but our Legislators are best able to enquire into the Truth of those Abuses, and redress them; and to them, we submit it.

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